

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Violence Prevention Office

Myths

Myth: Most rapes are committed by strangers.

Fact: While sexual assaults and rapes are also committed by strangers, the vast majority of the time (80 percent), the survivor knows her assailant. This is especially true on college campuses.

(National Criminal Victimization Survey, 2003)

Myth: Women often lie about being sexually assaulted.

Fact: Unfortunately, false reports do happen for sexual assault and rape as they do for other violent crimes. In fact, the rate of false or unfounded reports for sexual assault is the same as is for any other violent crime: 8 percent. This means that approximately 92 percent of sexual assault reports are true.

(Acquaintance rape of college students, 2003)

Myth: Only women can be raped.

Fact: Men can also be raped or in violent relationships or stalked. It is estimated that about 10 percent of acquaintance rape victims are male. These crimes are reported even less than when females are assaulted.

(Sexual Assault on Campus: the Problem, and the Solution, 1992)

Myth: People who commit sexual violence are psychotic, crazed individuals who don't know any better.

Fact: Sexual violence is most often not the product of psychotic episodes. Incidences of sexual violence are controlled and premeditated to frighten, humiliate or dominate another

individual. The people who commit these crimes appear just as normal as anyone else. Their actions, however, set them apart.

Myth: Sexual violence happens, but only in really big cities, not here in college.

Fact: Sexual violence happens everywhere, perhaps especially on college campuses. College women are four times as likely to experience sexual violence than nonstudents.

(Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network, www.rainn.org)

Myth: Domestic violence can only happen within a marriage.

Fact: Domestic violence, or relationship violence as it is sometimes called, can happen within any intimate relationship and also among former partners. It happens when any one person within any relationship abuses the other.

Myth: Relationship violence most often is something that happens once and then never happens again.

Fact: Relationship violence takes place in a pattern or cycle of violence. There are often periods of apology and a relief from violence, but these give way to more tension and more violence. One instance of violence is never OK, and unfortunately it generally means that more violence will happen.

Myth: If stalking is ignored, it will just go away. Stalkers are harmless.

Fact: The average length of stalking is 1.8 years. Within intimate relationships, this increases to 2.2 years. Also, 81 percent of women stalked by a current or former husband or cohabitating partner were physically assaulted. Thirty-one percent were also sexually assaulted. Stalking is dangerous and rarely goes away without intervention.

(Stalking in America: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Study, 1998)

Myth: It can't happen to me.

Fact: As much as we all might wish and want to believe that is the case, unfortunately it's not. Sexual violence happens to infants, the elderly, lesbians/gays, people of color, individuals with disabilities; women and men of any age, race, socioeconomic status or religion. On college campuses, it is the second most prevalent violent crime. We especially are vulnerable.

(Final Report: Understanding Crime Victimization Among College Students:
Implications for Crime Prevention, 1995)